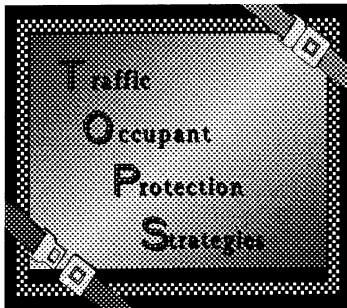


## TRAFFIC OCCUPANT PROTECTION STRATEGIES (TOPS) TRAINING CURRICULUM REVISED

The Traffic Law Enforcement Division at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has developed the *Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies (TOPS)* training curriculum. It

contains the latest information on safety belts, child safety seats, and air bags. *TOPS* is a course designed specifically for law enforcement officers.



Promoting safety belt usage laws and their enforcement by state and local law enforcement agencies will reduce deaths and injuries due to traffic crashes. This 7-hour workshop is one way local agencies can respond to the *Presidential Initiative for Increasing Seat Belt Use Nationwide*, as described in Executive Order of April, 1997.

### New Information

In 1990, NHTSA first introduced the *Occupant Protection Usage and Enforcement* curriculum. Both because of the success of this original course and advances in the field of occupant protection, the course was due for a major overhaul. *TOPS* shifts the focus from officer belt use to enforcement of belt laws and other current occupant protection issues. There is a new section on post crash examination of occupant protection devices.

The new *TOPS* curriculum is intended to encourage law enforcement agencies to enforce occupant protection laws and to reach out to the public with media messages and community presentations. These

materials will help law enforcement agencies conduct training to create interest and behavior change in occupant protection usage.

The curriculum package contains lesson plans for the instructor, one videotape, overhead slides, and diskettes. There are seven modules so that course sponsors and instructors can tailor the course to their specific needs and unique interests. The first three are core modules; the next four are optional.

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### *Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies (TOPS) Modules*

*Occupant Protection Risk and Survival*  
*Evaluating Crash Dynamics*  
*Enforcement and Education*

*Advocating for Occupant Protection*  
*Looking Beyond the Ticket*  
*Public Information and Education*

*Rescue Guidelines for Air Bag Equipped Vehicles*

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### *Workshop Lesson Plan Videotape*

This VHS videotape contains 50 short segments that can be integrated into the lessons. Segments include descriptions of the new air bags in next year model vehicles (for example, head and knee bolster air bags), an example of an universal child safety seat installation device, and stories by officers who have been saved by occupant protection devices.

### *Optional Exercises*

There are 27 interactive exercises in the appendix. For example, there is a checklist for conducting safety seat clinics showing how to properly use child safety seats. The instructor can choose to do these exercises in groups or individually.

**Handouts**

There are over 40 handouts for participants to use during the class or to take back to their organization for distribution. There is no participant manual.

**Overhead Projection Slides**

Overhead slides are included in the course materials. The slides are also included on diskettes for instructors who want to print their own color slides or use the diskettes in computerized projections.

**Crashes Aren't Accidents . . . .**

The vast majority of all fatal and non-fatal injuries in America, including traffic injuries, are not acts of fate but are predictable and preventable. Traffic injuries are the leading cause of on-the-job fatalities and the third leading cause of death for all Americans.

**. . . . Seat Belts Work**

The quickest, easiest, and most effective way to prevent traffic injuries and fatalities is to make certain that every vehicle occupant is properly buckled upon every trip. Seat belts work. When a traffic crash occurs, occupants are still traveling at the vehicle's original speed at the moment of impact. Unbelted occupants slam into the steering wheel, windshield, or other parts of the vehicle's interior. Seat belts are effective in reducing fatalities and injuries caused by this second "human

collision." Vigorous enforcement of safety belt and child safety seat laws by police is effective in getting people to buckle up and protect their children.

**Win-Win for Police**

Enforcing seat belt laws is a win-win situation for law enforcement agencies. While saving lives in their community, police will also encourage parents to teach young children to buckle up on every trip, thus establishing a beneficial lifelong habit. By vigorously enforcing their state's safety belt law, whether it's a secondary or standard law, police will also reduce incidents of crime, according to studies described in *TOPS*. Reaching out to the community in presentations will help publicize the importance of wearing seat belts, solicit support from community members, and encourage positive behavior change.

The Regional Offices of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and your State Highway Safety Office will be able to provide technical assistance in this effort.

**HOW TO ORDER**

To order a copy of the *Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies (TOPS)* training curriculum, write to Jim Onder, Traffic Law Enforcement Division, NTS-13, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, send a fax to (202) 366-7721, or e-mail: [jonder@nhtsa.dot.gov](mailto:jonder@nhtsa.dot.gov)

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